

Mapping Our Future 2030 Comprehensive Plan

SWOT Analysis – Public Meeting #1



Cobb County...Expect the Best!

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On Tuesday, March 14th, 2006, the Cobb County Community Development Agency held the first public meeting for the formation of the Community Agenda section of “Mapping Cobb’s Future: 2030 Comprehensive Plan”. Approximately 100 people attended the meeting and the individuals came from diverse areas of the county. The meeting started with a brief presentation by Jason Gaines and Dana Johnson that described the planning process and informed the public about the various ways in which they can provide input into the document. After the presentation, the community members were separated into three groups. Each group had two facilitators to guide the discussions and take notes on the substance of each conversation. The intent of the “break out” groups was to perform a SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunities, and threats) analysis. The SWOT analysis provides staff a clear understanding of how these individuals perceive quality-of-life in the county. A complete listing of the community’s comment can be seen in the matrix below. The information is presented by group to facilitate comparisons.

There were a number of trends that became evident from this initial analysis. In the discussion of present strengths, reference was made in all groups to the network of parks, greenspace, and multi-use trails existing in Cobb County. This includes a special mention of the prominent role the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park plays on the scenic, recreational, and cultural landscape of Cobb County. In addition, the low tax environment of Cobb County and the quality of the government/employees were mentioned as strengths in the community. Finally, the residential nature of the county and expanding economic diversity was frequently mentioned as positive attributes of the community.

The second part of the analysis delves into the present weaknesses as seen by the community. This provides a list of areas that can be improved upon where possible. Some of the items that were mentioned by multiple groups include: traffic, crime, public transit, and communication between government and the community. Large portions of the discussion in two of the groups were focused on various issues relating to transportation and mobility. The third group focused more on community building and neighborhood protection.

The third component of the analysis is a discussion about future opportunities that can be maximized by Cobb as a way to leverage local and national trends. The issues common to all groups included: expansion and improvement of the transit system and greenspace protection. The other issues that are noted in the analysis below did not have consistency between the groups.

The fourth and final component of the analysis is the identification of future threats. In this part of the exercise some common themes that were talked about by multiple groups include: water resources, sprawl, encroachment on stable neighborhoods, and crime. The issue of crime brings up an interesting issue concerning perceptions in a community. There is a perception in the community that crime is increasing. When you look at crime statistics you see the perception could be viewed as either true or false. Robbery, assault, rape, and vehicle theft have seen increases from 200 – 2004. On the other hand, murder and larceny have seen decreases in the same time period. The point is that perceptions of a community can have lasting consequences on the livability of areas.

These insights into the community will form the basis for ensuring that the original issues and opportunities that were identified by county staff correspond with the thoughts in the community. This information has also provided staff with unedited responses from the community that are a valuable resource as we continue to develop the 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

Group 1 – Facilitators Jason Gaines and Philip Westbrook

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family values ▪ KMNBP ▪ Park system ▪ Education ▪ Diversity ▪ People ▪ Large lots ▪ Tree cover ▪ Chattahoochee River ▪ Water resources ▪ Public safety ▪ Cobb employees ▪ Cumberland/Galleria ▪ Taxes ▪ Emergency management ▪ Good economy ▪ Electric service ▪ East Cobb Road system 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integration of transportation service ▪ I-75 ▪ Greenspace ▪ Tree preservation ▪ Lack of community centers ▪ Lack of sense of community ▪ Traffic ▪ Crime/gangs ▪ Traffic light signals ▪ Stormwater ▪ Public transportation ▪ Integration of government ▪ Historic preservation ▪ Sign positing for meetings ▪ Lack of effective community link to County resources ▪ Lack of public interest
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plan densities ▪ Light rail ▪ CCT expansion ▪ Traffic signal synchronization ▪ Implement environmentally sensitive development ▪ Green buildings ▪ LEEDS ▪ Easy living standards ▪ Life cycle communities 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sprawl ▪ High Density development ▪ Crime ▪ Educational leadership ▪ School overcrowding ▪ Water resources

Group 2 – Facilitators Kyethea Kirk and Michael Tuller

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Schools ▪ Low taxes ▪ Location ▪ KMNBP/NPS parks ▪ Residential neighborhoods ▪ Trail system ▪ Neighborhood character ▪ Suburban neighborhoods ▪ East Cobb Park ▪ CCT/GRTA Express Bus ▪ Mixed-use in some areas 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Traffic ▪ Roadway design ▪ Transit system ▪ Limited park and ride lots ▪ Mass transit does not go to where people work ▪ Public safety ▪ Not a live, work, play area ▪ Not a walkable community
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve/expand transit system ▪ Commercial nodes ▪ Promote telecommuting ▪ Designate urban corridors ▪ Create more trails/parks/greenspace ▪ Event dining ▪ Enhance public safety ▪ Create more sidewalks ▪ Conversion of apartments to condominiums ▪ Hyde Farm ▪ Promoting homeownership at all income levels 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lower density designations are being encroached upon by higher density development ▪ Infill housing ▪ Traffic ▪ McMansions ▪ Encroachment of incompatible development into suburban areas ▪ Crime ▪ Too many apartments

Group 3 – Facilitator Dana Johnson

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Greenspace ▪ Parks ▪ Cultural programs ▪ Community programs/facilities ▪ Not too many apartments ▪ Silver comet trail ▪ Quality affordable housing ▪ Schools ▪ Good responsible government ▪ Low taxes ▪ Convenient shopping opportunities ▪ Quality-of-life ▪ Very little blight ▪ Residential friendly development ▪ Improving jobs housing balance ▪ Quality public safety ▪ Community organizations 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Traffic ▪ Greenspace loss ▪ Better sign posting locations ▪ Loss of tree canopy ▪ Tree replacement guidelines ▪ Insufficient buffers ▪ Loss of historic structures ▪ Water usage ▪ Population growth ▪ Property tax increases ▪ Consistency between Comp Plan and decision making ▪ Lack of public participation in meetings ▪ Home affordability ▪ Insufficient vision for community ▪ Lack of senior housing options ▪ Land affordability ▪ Loss of older affordable diverse neighborhoods ▪ Distribution of park land countywide
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commercial/office acreage audit ▪ Better tree preservation ordinance ▪ Impact Fees ▪ Rail transit/Commuter trains ▪ Intermodal freight facilities ▪ Create better professional opportunities ▪ Distribution of professional office buildings countywide ▪ Redevelop abandoned commercial ▪ Mixed-use ▪ Create a public information strategy ▪ Neighborhood participation in land use changes ▪ Application completeness ▪ OSC/CS zoning revisions ▪ Longer zoning sign postings ▪ Preserve large tract open space ▪ School system planning 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incorrect population projections ▪ Deteriorating commercial structures ▪ Stormwater ▪ Increasing impervious surface ▪ Increasing demand on sewer capacity ▪ Development in areas with no sewer service ▪ Too many commercial areas with unused parking ▪ Interagency coordination ▪ Lack of interest from younger residents ▪ Public knowledge of evacuation plans ▪ Declining quality-of-life ▪ Poor air quality ▪ Finite water resources